

Public Health Information Technology Steering Committee  
First Phase of Collaborative Business Planning  
**Executive Summary**

Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs) have completed a first step towards a collaborative plan for improving business-work processes that are common across LHJs. The Public Health Information Technology (PHIT) Steering Committee has targeted 13 processes and has identified where, within those processes, there is ‘room for measurable improvement’. These improvement opportunities indicate where shared investments would yield a return in terms of increased staff productivity, work effectiveness and, potentially, public health. These 13 business-work processes were ranked by ‘room for improvement’ and by ‘importance to public health mission’. Rankings also indicate which processes are reasonable targets for the use of information technology.

We are now in the process of communicating our findings to the broader public health community in order to get their reaction and feedback. Our objectives are to determine a) if these finding are broadly applicable across LHJs and b) the extent to which the public health community can move along a common planning and implementation path. If and as it makes sense, our next step will be to develop an Information Technology Vision for enabling these improvements within a targeted subset of these business-work processes.

Business-Work Processes and Their Rankings:

BUSINESS-WORK PROCESS	Impact Rank		I.T. Target	
	Room for Measurable Improvement	Importance to P.H. Mission	Complexity	IT “Fit”
1. Responding to Public Health Incidents	1	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1
2. Documenting Service Delivery	2	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1
3. Managing Billing/ Receivables	3	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1
4. Measuring Outcomes	3	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4
5. Contract Management & Reporting	3	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4
6. Managing Individual Entity Encounters	6	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	6
7. Organizing Group and Community Activities	9	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	6
8. Strategic Planning and Response - Resource Allocation	6	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	8
9. Organizing Information Requests	11	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8

BUSINESS-WORK PROCESS	Impact Rank		I.T. Target	
	Room for Measurable Improvement	Importance to P.H. Mission	Complexity	IT "Fit"
10. Managing Accounts Payable	11	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8
11. Setting Public Policy	9	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	11
12. Implementing Business Policies & Procedure	8	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	11
13. Managing Payroll & Employee Benefits	13	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	11

Legend: 'Room for Improvement' & 'IT Fit' are relative rankings. 'Public Health Mission' & 'Complexity' are grouped into one of three tiers with 1<sup>st</sup> being the most important.

#### Planning Process Used for this Phase:

1. *Target Business-Work Processes that Make Sense from a Business Perspective* - The LHJs perform a number of business-work processes. Time limitations prevented a comprehensive definition of all processes and budgetary constraints restrict the number/amount of investments that can be made. In the interest of focusing on processes where investing in change would do the most good, LHJ representatives identified processes: a) that are operationally intensive for them, and b) where there is room for measurable improvement if the process is changed in some way.

In identifying processes, the focus WAS NOT to select processes based upon the potential value of IT in streamlining that process. Determining where and how IT could be optimally used would be done during a later phase of the project.

2. *Make Sure Everyone is on the Same Page* - Agreement was reached on a description of each process that outlined:
  - The condition, activity or event that triggers the process
  - The condition, activity or event that concludes the process
  - The work steps or activities that are included in the process
3. *Quantify What Could be Improved and by How Much* - For each process, room for measurable improvements was defined across eight categories. In those cases where there was room for measurable improvement, the level was quantified as High, Medium and Low.
4. *Find the Big Wins* -- All processes were ranked in terms of the Impact that could be achieved if investments were made in the process. 'Room for Measurable Improvement' and 'Importance to the Public Health Mission' were the key factors. Processes were also ranked as Targets for I.T. investments. 'Complexity of the Process' and 'Fit' of I.T. to the improvement opportunities were the factors.

### Feedback and Evaluation Objectives:

We will be meeting with representatives of LHJs and other public health agencies to review our findings. Our intent is to determine the extent to which common planning and implementation of solutions is practical. Our objectives are to:

1. Confirm that a targeted set of business-work processes is generally applicable across Local Health Jurisdictions. Refine this set of processes where and as appropriate.
2. Assess the level of agreement about the room for measurable improvement in each of the processes.
3. Understand the extent to which Local Health Jurisdictions are interested and able to participate in the implementation of common process changes and/or technology solutions. Participation may range from purchase discounts on information systems to common data standard, business practices and shared systems.